

THE OTHER ROOM

there is always somebody in the other room
listening beyond the wall.

there is always somebody in the other room
who is wondering what you are doing
in another room without them.

there is always somebody in the other room
who thinks you feel better without them.

there is always somebody in the other room
who thinks you are thinking of somebody else
or who thinks you don't care for anybody
except yourself in the other room.

there is always somebody in the other room
who no longer thinks about you like they used
to.

there is always somebody in the other room
who is giving you up piece by piece.

there is always somebody in the other room
who is disgusted when you drop something
or who is displeased when you cough.

there is always somebody in the other room
reading a book.

there is always somebody in the other room
talking on the telephone.

there is always somebody in the other room
and you don't know quite who it is
and you are surprised when they make a sound
or go down the hall to the bathroom.

but there isn't always somebody in the
room.

sometimes there isn't another room
and if there is
sometimes there isn't anybody
in it.

TOKEN DRUNK

I was standing around by the edge of the boat
and the young man walked up to me
and asked, "are you the token drunk?"
the boat was full of media people, models,
photographers, article writers.
there had just been a wedding and I had made
myself two turkey sandwiches and was working
on the champagne.

the man started talking about the movies and I stood there thinking, I've missed a day at the racetrack. things are always getting in the way of the racetrack: weddings, trips to Europe, interviews and sickness. Linda was talking to a fat German in dark glasses. it wasn't going to be a very good party. "pardon me," I said to my fellow, "but I've got to get some more to drink." when I came back I had this nice little girl with me; she was such a nice little girl that I didn't even think about sex. she worked for the bride and I knew the bride and we talked about her job working for the bride. then I told the girl, "if I don't make trouble at these parties then there just isn't any trouble. I don't see why I have to be the one who has to make the trouble." "I've heard that you do cause things," she said. "really?" I asked, putting my hand on the back of her ass. "really," she said. then I rolled my hand around and around on her ass. we kept talking and soon we all went in, the little girl, Linda, the German with the dark glasses and myself. the drinks were inside and the drinks were running low. I was getting worried when the groom walked up and told us, "we are going to the Beverly Hills Hotel ..."

when I awakened I was in a strange bed but Linda was with me so it was all right. "well," she said, "you pulled your old knife trick again, you pulled your knife on the maitre d' and the waiters in the Polo Lounge, and now you'll never be able to go to the Beverly Hills Hotel again." "I shouldn't carry that thing," I said, "I always forget." "they were going to call the police but we talked them out of it, then we drove over here and you smashed in the front of your car because you couldn't find the reverse gear and you kept ramming the phone pole, you wanted to smash into the car next to you because you didn't like the way he was parked but you couldn't find the reverse gear so you gave it up."

I got up and began to dress. "let's get out of here. where are we?" "we're at the Hansens'."

Hansen was a camera man.

I walked out; Hansen was there, Mrs. Hansen was in Paris; there was also an actor there reading the funny papers and a director staring out at the ocean.

"Linda's getting ready," I told them, "we'll be going soon."

somebody coughed.

Linda came out and we walked to the car,

there was broken glass about.

I got it into reverse without trouble

but scraped the side of the car against a cement abutment.

then I drove off the wrong way into a one-way street.

I noticed that right off and

took a left at the next corner.

it was a Sunday morning in a Hades they called Marina del Rey.

WAR

the black and the yellow hit together
at the bottom of the hill.

the black stopped in the crash

and the yellow veered off from the
black

and came directly toward me with
the driver slumped over the wheel.

I should put my car in reverse,

I thought, but my hand didn't move
upon the gearshift.

then the yellow began slanting off

and I thought, it's not going to hit

me directly, it's going to scrape the
side, and then it passed on my right side
silently,

you couldn't have gotten a sheet of paper
between us.

then the yellow crashed head-on into the
car of a man braked to my right and two
car lengths back.

the yellow pushed him back, bounced off,
slanted right behind my car, crossed the
street, ran up a curbing and was still.

I had not seen the initial crash

I had only heard it.

I circled into a gas station

and sat there

looking at the three crashed cars.

if I had put it in reverse,

I would have been there too.

I started the engine and drove